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RUNNING HEAD: THE CORPORATE COLONIZATION OF NARRATIVE

Stories of a Corporate World: The Corporate Colonization of Narrative

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Abstract

Following Stanley Deetz's (1992) work, I argue that storytelling can operate as a powerful medium for corporate colonization. Stories exist as sites where subjectivity forms through the intersection of various ideologies. As one such ideology, managerialism structures the world in ways that privilege the interests of corporate elites. Using Burke's (1931) concept of form, I suggest that stories can draw audiences into the acceptance of premises about how they should act, such that they become managerial subjects with a particular narrative structure ordering their experiences.

Stories of a Corporate World: The Corporate Colonization of Narrative

"The work that I do is my life," the voice responded without hesitation. "That's what I was educated, trained for. I've done it all my life." These words came to me during a recent telephone conversation with Helen, a fifty-nine year-old finance director of the small Midwestern health services corporation where she has worked for nearly fourteen years. There, she dedicates at least fifty hours of her life each week to her job. During parts of the year, that number rises to an excess of sixty. Each weekday morning, she awakens before the sunrise, drives through rush-hour traffic to the far side of the city, works until sunset, and then commutes home through evening traffic. While at home, she spends a brief few hours doing things that she enjoys: eating, watching television, listening to music, occasionally some reading, and on very special occasions, a night out. However, she typically ensures that she is in bed by nine, so she rest enough to do the same routine once again the following day, despite her wishes to the contrary. Recently, her doctors informed her that she suffers from chronic high blood pressure, a potentially fatal condition that stems directly from the high levels of stress that characterize her everyday work experience. Although she frequently dreams of leaving her job, she has committed herself to finishing her remaining years before her official retirement in part because she fears the loss of health insurance and benefits that her job provides.

Helen's story is not unique. For millions of Americans, her story is their story. Only the names, the locations, duties, and co-workers change. The routine itself is largely the same. Indeed, contemporary society has fallen victim to a problem of grave consequence. As Deetz (1992) suggests, it has become increasingly structured around the corporation as the central and dominant site of activity. So much of our hopes, fears, dreams, and values have become attached to our lives in and about the corporations where we work, shop, eat, even play. Although in

many cases, the primacy of the corporation has brought with it substantial economic gains, the costs are considerable:

> [People] are gradually working more hours, have decreasing leisure time, have less time with their families, pay a higher percentage of their incomes to the maintenance of their jobs, live where crime and drug abuse are rising, and have a more narrow education. (Deetz, 1992, p. 245)

In such cases, the material gains seem either to obscure or even to justify the substantial sacrifices that one must make.

The corporatization of everyday life also reduces the quality of one's life experiences in other more subtle ways. As Deetz (1992) explains, like the family and local community, corporations provide a sense of identity and meaning for people; nonetheless, they "offer a secondary, reconstructed set of meanings rather than primary 'life world' ones" (p. 40). Corporate rhetors, namely those who occupy the higher echelons of the organization, frequently have no immediate tie with the place where their audience members' daily lives unfold. Arguably, they have neither any necessary interest or immediate appreciation for the way that people in that locality live, except for the potential profits or work that they represent (Mander & Goldsmith, 1996; Jameson & Miyoshi, 1998). Nevertheless, they frequently deploy alluring, exciting, even seductive messages regarding how one should live, despite the great geographical, culture, or interpersonal distance that might separate them from those people.

In this manner, one's everyday experiences are constituted in ways that support the interests of others, often beyond one's awareness. To the extent that one accepts the images and mores that corporate rhetors promote, one essentially becomes a corporate subject. The formation of identity and experience in such ways constitutes what Deetz (1992) calls *corporate*

colonization. Corporate colonization entails the increasing tendency for people in contemporary society to structure their world in terms of corporate ideologies. Structuring one's life in such a manner implicitly supports the interests of corporate elites, while reducing one's own ability to live one's life deliberately in alternative ways. The threats that colonization poses to one's well-being and efficacy demands scholarly attention.

This paper extends Deetz's (1992) framework by articulating how colonization occurs through storytelling. Specifically, I argue that stories are potential sites for the formation of corporate subjectivities. Articulated always at the nexus of multiple ideologies, stories embody varied possibilities for experience. Through storytelling, the subjectivities of both tellers and audiences are constituted. To the extent that corporate ideologies become dominant in the formation of those subjectivities, colonization occurs. In offering one explanation of how storytelling can lead to the creation of corporate subjectivities, I invoke Burke's (1931) concept of form. Ultimately, I conclude that to the extent that storytellers can create narrative form with their audiences, identification occurs, through which the two constitute themselves as subjects in ideologically similar ways.

Ideology and Discourse in Corporate Colonization

Deetz (1992) suggests that corporate colonization has occurred through the saturation of everyday life with messages that support corporate interests. Corporate messages abound in contemporary American society:

> Everyday language has gradually become commercialized, private control of media and places of expression have been extended and centralized, education has become increasingly professionalized and focused on job skills, and women have added to a less expensive and more highly trained work force. (Deetz, 1992, p. 18)

Corporations have initiated "huge expenditures on public relations, greater educational involvement, and the purchase of most mass communication capacities" (Deetz, 1992, p. 18). Deetz argues that they even have effected legislation that further increases their power and control. The result of these efforts has been a radical restructuring of the discursive worlds in which we, as members of contemporary society, live.

In this way, corporate colonization is a largely discursive phenomenon. As members of American society, we inhabit a world that is constituted through communicative practices. These practices constitute what many scholars call *discourse*. On one level, discourse consists of the blow-by-blow interaction that occurs in a specific social encounter. Various scholars talk about discourse in this sense (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Conley & O'Barr, 1990; Erickson & Schultz, 1982; Holstein, 1993; Maynard, 1989; Miller, 1994; Spencer & McKinney, 1997). The specific practices that interlocutors enact comprise the discourse that transpires between them. However, other scholars, who study larger, more macroscopic phenomena, observe that these various practices can exhibit similar tendencies across potentially innumerable moments in time and space. Despite the uniqueness of their happening during those moments, they collectively embody a particular "way of being" in the world (Deetz, 1992, pp. 137-138). Those practices constitute *a* discourse, attending to which scholars tend to emphasize the coherence that stretches across them (e.g., Clair, 1996; Deetz, 1992; Mumby, 1987, 1988). Discourse, in this sense, refers to a vast stream of social practices. This dual sense of the term *discourse* is an important point to remember. The latter sense speaks to the transformation of contemporary American society as a whole, which Deetz (1992) describes in his discussion of corporate colonization; however, one should not neglect that any overarching discourse exists only through discourse in

the former microscopic, moment-to-moment sense. Macro and microelements interrelate always and mutually condition each other in this manner.

Many scholars have discussed discourse as being enmeshed with the phenomenon of ideology (e.g., Burawoy, 1979; Clair, 1993, 1996; Coward & Ellis, 1977; Gregg, 1993; Hall, 1985; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Mumby, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1996, 1997; Nadesan, 1997; Parker, 1992; Shome, 1996; Vivian, 1999; Willis, 1977). *Ideologies* consist of systematic "frames" for experience. They are "frameworks of thinking and calculation about the world—the 'ideas' which people use to figure out how the social world works, what their place is in it and what they ought to do" (Hall, 1985, p. 99). As Mumby (1989) suggests, ideology "mobilizes" meaning—and therefore action—in a particular manner (p. 297). How one experiences the world at any given moment is constituted by the ideology into which one is discursively placed. In this sense, discourse operates as the material realization of ideology. When people act, they necessarily do so through the structuring force of a particular ideological frame. Ideology enables the coherence that conjoins particular discursive elements to unfold as a larger stream of action. It gives form to actions that allows them to incarnate behaviorally in a given manner. Without it, no such coherence across otherwise disparate moments of action of any scope could exist.

Nevertheless, the structuring force of ideology is neither absolute nor singular. While not completely rejecting the concept of ideology, many scholars tend to problematize notions of vast overarching coherence. Some scholars eschew relatively macroscopic uses of *discourse* as a term and instead speak of discursive "elements" (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 100) or "moments" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 111), which may or may not instantiate some broader ideological current. Others exhibit more tolerance towards such uses, but similarly guard against too simple, general, or monolithic notions of coherence (e.g., Coward & Ellis, 1977; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996;

Jacques, 1996; Kondo, 1990; Schrag, 1997). They emphasize how any particular moment of action instantiates multiple ideologies, which compete with each other in complex ways in the structuring of action.

From this perspective, these scholars suggest that meaning is always *overdetermined* by many different, rather than singular ideological elements (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996). As Althusser (1962) suggests, overdetermination involves the formation of a unity, albeit one that incorporates radically the many contradictions among the parts that constitute it:

> This means that if the "differences" that constitute each of the instances in play (manifested in the "accumulation" discussed by Lenin) "*merge*" into a real unity, they are not "*dissipated*" as pure *phenomena* in the internal unity of a *simple* contradiction. The *unity* they *constitute* in this "fusion" into a revolutionary rupture, *is constituted by their own essence and effectivity*, by what they are, and according to the specific modalities of their action. In *constituting* this *unity*, they *reconstitute* and complete their basic animating unity, but at the same time they also bring out its *nature*: the "contradiction" is inseparable from the total structure of the social body in which it is found, inseparable from its formal conditions of existence, and even from the instances it governs; it is radically *affected by them*, determining, but also determined in one and the same movement, and determined by the various *levels* and *instances* of the social formation it animates. (¶ 16)

As a kind of unity-of-contradictions, the production of meaning at any particular moment can be viewed as occurring at the intersection of various ideological currents, each of which "pulls" it in particular directions but cannot fully determine the meaning that is produced. It is this struggle among ideologies that enables the formation of meaning to occur at all, although each constrains

it according to its own structuring content. A unity of meaning exists, but one that paradoxically incorporates the innumerable contradictions among its components. Hall (1985) describes the relationship between any particular ideology and meaning as one of "no guarantees" (p. 94). Some "slippage" always exists between the formation of meaning and the structuring force of ideology, for the relationship between the two is always mediated by the structuring force of *other* ideologies.

Given this perspective, one must focus upon the highly particular ways by which moment-to-moment action unfolds to understand how massive social transformations and coherences occur. Although Deetz (1992) explores corporate colonization in a very broad, macroscopic sense, he explicitly suggests that corporate worldviews form through everyday practices. For instance, at points in his argument, he invokes Foucault's (1975/1995) notion of discipline to explain how the formation of corporate subjectivities occurs at "innumerable sites and moments" (Deetz, 1992, p. 252) rather than in specialized locations. Mumby (1988) parallels this notion. He suggests that a collective identity develops as members participate in a particular set of social practices, through which they experience the world: "The sense of 'organizational consciousness' that every formal organization develops is not simply something that is in the heads of its members; it manifests itself in the everyday practices of the organization" (Mumby, 1988, p. 11). Therefore, the reality that members of a collective experience in common is not something that is purely cognitive or affective, but something material. It is constituted in the ongoing, often mundane discursive practices that members enact as they communicate routinely with each other.

Narrative as a Medium of Colonization

Narratives comprise one form of everyday discursive practice through which meaning is constituted. Focusing explicitly upon organizational life, many scholars have addressed how narrative creates a system of meanings, or "culture," within particular organizations (e.g., Boje, 1995; Clair, 1993; Croft, 1999; Mumby, 1987; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Trujillo & Dionisopoulos, 1987). Others have focused upon narration apart from the context of the formal organization yet with organizational consequences (e.g., Bormann, 1985; Ehrenhaus, 1993; Fisher, 1984, 1987; Nakagawa, 1990, 1993; Ochs & Taylor, 1992; van Dijk, 1993). Despite the many differences among their works, all of these scholars approach narrative as an important vehicle for the creation of common meanings among otherwise diverse persons. Narratives operate not only as ways by which human beings account for their experiences, but also as modalities for social coordination, collaboration, and other forms of commonality.

Scholars have offered myriad definitions of narrative. Some of those definitions limit narrative to the making of verbal accounts for experiences and events (e.g., Mink, 1970; White, 1980). Others disassociate narrative and verbalization, such that narrative exists as a general property of human experience, regardless of one's efforts to verbalize some set of occurrences either to oneself or to some other (e.g., Carr, 1986; Crites, 1986). With the latter, I suggest that human experience, regardless of whether or not one articulates some explicitly symbolic account of it, has a kind of *narrative structure*. As Carr (1986) explains, language and other symbolic action remains generally incidental to what one might understand as narrative:

> We already pointed out that what is essential to narration is not that it is a verbal act of telling, as such, but that it embodies a certain point (or points) of view on a sequence of events. Furthermore, narrative structure refers not only to such a play of points of view

> but also to the organizational features of the events themselves in such terms as beginning-middle-end, suspension-resolution, departure-return, repetition, and the like. We maintain that all these structures and organizational features pertain to everyday experience and action whether or not the narrative structure or the act of narrative structuring takes the form of explicit verbalization. (p. 62)

For Carr, narrative exists as a kind of coherence across otherwise disparate moments of experience. Narrative pervades human apprehension of actions and events, such that one cannot experience actions *as actions* or events *as events* apart from it. It occurs as a creative act, an endogenous, structuring movement that flows through one's moment-to-moment experiences and renders them as particular moments of an as-yet-unfolding or already-unfolded temporal whole. Narrative and coherence within everyday life intertwine absolutely. They comprise two sides of the same coin.

Nevertheless, in exploring the relationship between narrative and social action, one inevitably must focus upon the translation of one's experiences into verbal accounts. Only through such translation can narrative operate as a medium for collective experience. In reference to this act of translation, particularly when it occurs in the company of others, I suggest the term *storytelling*. Narrative consists of the moment-to-moment structuring of experience as an intelligible and coherent flow of occurrences, rather than a disconnected sequence of happenings. In contrast, a story consists of a translation of that structure into words or other symbols, either for oneself or others. Stories operate arguably as a universal feature of human social life. Many scholars suggest that the accounting of one's experiences in some verbal form occurs in all social groups, although the specific ways by which that it occurs might differ (Bormann, 1985; Bruner, 1996; Carr, 1986; Fisher, 1984, 1987; Freeman, 1997; Maines, 2001;

Richardson, 1990). Where social relations evolve, stories likely will evolve with, through, and in recognition of them.

In this sense also, storytelling can operate as an powerful medium for corporate colonization. As Fisher (1984) suggests, stories function as an important modalities through which commonality can evolve among otherwise different persons:

> The idea of human beings as storytellers indicates the generic form of all symbol composition; it holds that symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to induce others to dwell in them to establish ways of living in common, communities in which there is sanction for the story that constitutes one's life. (p. 6)

As such, stories operate as central sites for the creation of common ways of being. Nevertheless, those ways of being do not arise apart from the workings of power. As Mumby (1987, 1988) suggests, stories do tend to create a common sense of reality among storytellers and audiences; however, that sense necessarily implies ways of acting that support the interests of particular persons over others. In other words, as forms of discursive practice, stories are not neutral. They instantiate particular ideological elements, which thereafter accordingly mobilize one's experiences towards certain ends.

Nevertheless, one must not forget the lack of any natural correspondence between ideology and meaning. Stories certainly do provide for a particular way of being in the world. Often, they do so in very powerful ways. However, any story unfolds at the intersection of multiple ideological currents, many of which structure experience in ways that contradict the others. In this sense, storytelling never mobilizes one's experiences in a completely uniform, unidirectional manner. The meaning of a story is constituted through an ideological "tug-of-war"

between many different ways of being, as the ideologies that intersect through its telling vie for dominance. In the end, one particular discourse may emerge as the dominant one, such that it predominantly structures meaning. However, that meaning is never entirely determined by that ideology. As a result, both multiple interpretations of any one story and multiple tellings of the same set of experiences are always possible. As Bruner (1996) suggests, some degree of "freedom" always pervades narration, such that one has an ongoing capacity to choose some aspects of how one will act (p. 136). Any attempt to understand storytelling as a medium of corporate colonization must grapple with this fact.

Given this viewpoint, one can understand a story as a discursive "move" through which one explicitly or implicitly attempts to impose a particular narrative structure upon the world. In this sense, narrative structure operates ideologically as a way of structuring one's experiences: a kind of organon for one's actions through which they can unfold from moment to moment. Although the telling of a story brings with it no guarantee that one's audience will adopt that structure as their own, as many scholars suggest, the act of storytelling often functions very effectively in the promulgation of a particular way of experiencing existence (Maines, 2001; Mumby, 1987, 1988; Richardson, 1990). Because of this capacity, storytelling consists of a very likely site of corporate colonization, despite one's ongoing ability to respond to it in ways that undermine or reject the particular narrative structure that it attempts to impose upon the world. Although audiences always retain an ability to resist, the potential for corporate ways of being in the world to spread through storytelling appears to be substantial.

Creating the Corporate Subject. To understand the apparent power of storytelling as a medium for corporate colonization, one must look more closely at the relationship between ideology and the formation of meaning. *Subjectivity* consists of the whole set of dispositions that

one has for experience. It arises predominantly through one's previous experiences. As one acts in the world, one acquires certain tendencies for subsequent action, most of which lie beyond the reach of one's explicit awareness. However, because one's experiences always are changing, one's subjectivity also exists in a state of continuous flux. Its various elements do not have any necessary order or coherence (Coward & Ellis, 1977; Deetz, 1992; Gregg, 1993; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Jacques, 1996; Kondo, 1990; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Rather, that order and coherence emerge in ways contingent upon one's ongoing interactions with the world. However, regardless of how it emerges, one's subjectivity disposes one to a particular way of being and acting in the world.

Ideology provides for the creation of coherence among otherwise discontinuous elements in one's subjectivity. Because ideology attempts to structure one's experiences in a particular way, it has a capacity to provide a sense of completeness, congruence, and intelligibility to the otherwise inchoate farrago of one's being. In this way, the articulation of ideology within everyday discursive practices conditions the subjectivity of an individual. Many scholars speak of the capacity of ideology to "address" people, such that it becomes constitutive of their ongoing experiences (e.g., Althusser, 1971; Clair, 1996; Hall, 1985; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mumby, 1988, 1989). *Interpellation* consists of this "constitution" of the individual through discourse (Althusser, 1971). Hall (1985) explains that

> We are hailed or summoned by the ideologies which recruit us as their "authors," their essential subject. We are constituted by the unconscious processes of ideology, in that position of recognition or fixture between ourselves and the signifying chain without which no signification of ideological meaning would be possible. (p. 102)

The ideological elements of discourse enable the subjectivity, or the "I" within a particular individual's experiencing of the world to exist as it does. Although in a sense, that discourse was produced by particular individuals, it also creates the subjectivity by which further discourse can occur. Without the mediating force of ideology, the "I" that we so often take for granted in our day-to-day experiences could not be (Hall, 1985). Subjectivity does not exist apart from discourse in some pre-formed manner. Discourse ideologically creates subjects as it is articulated.

Deetz (1992) identifies *managerialism* as the discourse by which corporate colonization occurs. Rather than consisting of the domination of "managers" over other groups, managerialism refers to the pervasiveness of a particular set of practices in everyday life: what Deetz calls a "discursive genre" (p. 222). These practices can be enacted by anyone, regardless of his or her membership in a particular organization. Managerialism exists as one particular form of discourse, which operates always amidst the play of countless rivals. It becomes dominant when it successfully suppresses the other modes of "doing and being" that its rivals ideologically embody.

The way of "doing and being" that managerialism embodies positions the corporation at the center of one's activities. Deetz (1992) explains that

> [Managerialism] begins with an imaginary identification where the corporation and management become a unitary identity; its central motif is control; its primary mode of reasoning is cognitive-instrumental; its favored expressive modality is money; and its favored site of reproduction is the *formal* organization. (pp. 222-223)

Managerialism structures experience around concerns of money, control, and the perpetuation of the formal organization itself. Certainly, alternative definitions of experience—either in the

context of work or in other arenas of activity—are possible. For instance, one could conceptualize the activity of work as one of self-actualization: the realization of one's creative and productive potential. From such a vantage point, the experience of one's job would be constituted around concerns of individual talent, self-potential, freedom of expression, personal choice, imagination, and vision. Beneath the auspices of managerialism, these concerns certainly may exist; nonetheless, they are framed in terms of money, control, efficiency, and the achievement of formal organizational goals. Meaning is structured in ways that feature the corporation as the cornerstone of all other possible experiences.

As a kind of discursive practice, stories have the capacity to interpellate individuals in particular ways. Many scholars testify to the power of stories to engender particular forms of subjectivity (e.g., Croft, 1999; Ehrenhaus, 1993; Maines, 2001; Nakagawa, 1990, 1993; Richardson, 1990). For instance, examining the ways by which stories of sexual harassment are "sequestered" (p. 114) and denied exposure within an organization, Clair (1993) suggests that stories condition ways of acting and being within particular contexts. The confinement of stories of harassment within the organization from more visible communication can constitute subjects who do not experience themselves as being victims of harassment or who deny the importance of their own victimization. Stories ideologically can structure the possibilities of experience according to those ways of being that are privileged over other alternative ones. In this sense, they can constitute subjectivity for those who participate in their telling.

However, recalling the ongoing freedom of audiences to accept or to reject a story as a whole or in part, one returns to the notion that stories represent at best "moves" that promote particular ideological elements. As Bruner (1996) suggests, storytelling is an inherently negotiable activity: "We accept a certain essential contestability of stories. It is what makes

narrative so viable in cultural negotiation. You tell your version, I tell mine, and only rarely do we need litigation to settle the difference" (p. 143). I certainly agree with Bruner on this point; however, I caution against a view of storytelling that neglects the subtle yet significant role of power within it. Some degree of freedom always exists for audiences to contest the particular narrative structure through which a story attempts to order experience. Nevertheless, to the degree to which that structure remains implicit while the telling compellingly unfolds, one's ability to contest a given story likely diminishes. In such cases, one probably will accept the narrative structure that the story propagates without a second thought.

Identification, Narrative, and Form. Scholars have not clearly addressed the question of why storytelling has an apparently exceptional capacity to transform the subjectivities of audiences. Certainly, as Bruner (1996) suggests, storytelling is not always so successful; nevertheless, its capacity to be successful seems to be uncannily great. For example, Richardson (1990) speaks of the transformational possibilities of stories, specifically what she calls the *collective story*. The collective story speaks from and to the experiences of otherwise marginalized groups. As such, it provides an alternative sense of reality, one that the vast majority of people in a given society may not know or may reject. As Richardson (1990) explains, the story seems to have an especially heightened potential to unify people through the giving and legitimizing of a common narrative structure for their lives:

> People who belong to a particular category can develop a "consciousness of kind" and can galvanize other category members through the telling of the collective story. People do not even have to know each other for the social identification to take hold. By emotionally binding people together who have had the same experiences, whether in

> touch with each other or not, the collective story overcomes some of the isolation and alienation of contemporary life. (p. 129)

Fisher (1984) offers a similar argument. He suggests that stories "induce" others to order their lives in a particular way, one that allows some degree of commonality to emerge among storytellers and audiences (Fisher, 1984, p. 6). In this sense, stories can function as a means for eliciting collaboration and commonality among the participants in their telling. Although such collaboration and commonality do not necessarily develop, a remarkable capacity for eliciting them seems to be endemic to storytelling overall.

The notion of storytelling as "inducement" suggests that the telling of any story depends somewhat on a degree of *identification* among tellers and audiences. Burke (1973) describes identification as the sense of "we" that one feels regarding another person or a group: "Thus, a person may think of himself as 'belonging' to some special body more or less clearly defined (family, race, profession, church, social class, nation, etc., or various combinations of these)" (p. 268). In some sense, identification occurs as a symbolic, experiential movement "towards" another person, such that how one experiences the other intermeshes with how one experiences oneself. As many scholars suggest, identification can result in a convergence of ways of being between the identifier and the identifee (e.g., Cheney, 1983a, 1983b, 1991; Combs, Rosback, & Aamodt, 2000, May; Papa, Auwal, & Singhal, 1997; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). In the act of identifying, the former has a tendency to adopt the "premises" upon which the latter acts (Cheney, 1983a, p. 346). Moreover, she or he often has no explicit awareness that this adoption is occurring. In this manner, identification can operate as a powerful means through which ideological elements "spread" from one person to another. Identification conditions the formation of one's subjectivity partly through one's actions in response to some other.

Although scholars have offered many explanations regarding the intersection of subjectivity and story (e.g., Bruner, 1995, 1996; Croft, 1999; Freeman, 1997; Giddens, 1991; Maines, 2001; Nakagawa, 1990, 1993; Schrag, 1997), Burke's (1931) concept of *form* provides one compelling view. While Burke does not focus his attention on storytelling per se, his illustration of the concept through numerous examples from drama suggests some parallels. He distinguishes two phenomena in the unfolding of human experience: information and form. As distinguished from form, *information* has a "literal" quality (Burke, 1931, p. 38), whereby the audience perceives the meaning of something in relatively discrete packets. For the audience, that thing consists of distinct "facts," or moments of detail that have a very self-evident quality. In regarding information, an audience is concerned with particularities. Burke gives the example of a dramatic performance, regarding which the audience attends primarily to the lines as the actors deliver them one by one: "The contemporary audience hears the lines of the play or novel with the same equipment as it brings to reading the lines of its daily paper. It is content to have facts placed before it in some more or less adequate sequence" (Burke, 1931, p. 37).

On the other hand, form consists of the relationships *among* discrete details. In regarding form, an audience perceives things less as distinct bits, but as members of some whole. That whole has an unfolding quality for them, through which they anticipate each new moment as something that promises something more. For Burke (1931), form consists of "the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite" (p. 31). In this case, the audience is *not* content to attend merely to the "facts." Rather, it seeks something beyond each individual happening. As Burke (1931) suggests, there is a kind of "allurement, an itch for further developments" (p. 30). In the experiencing of form, the focus is less on the particulars and more on the less concrete, less "literal" shape of things relative to other things.

Burke suggests that such a shape can be created in a way that *involves* the audience: one that moves them to act with the one who is performing the action, such that one follows each and every step as that overall shape gradually forms. For Burke (1931), "eloquence" (p. 40) would consist of the creation of this shape in the most involving ways, whereby every new move in the unfolding action feels so natural or appropriate to the audience that they become engrossed in the entire movement rather than the particulars.

In this manner, form operates as a medium for identification. It has a rhetorical dimension, largely absent from its counterpart, information. Performer and audience can feel a sense of "sameness" as they collaborate in the unfolding of action. The inducement of that collaboration enables the convergence of "premises" that Cheney (1983a, 1983b, 1991) and others (e.g., Tompkins & Cheney, 1985; Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998) describe to occur. Audience members can acquire a particular ideological stance through the experiencing of form. In Carr's (1986) sense, they can take the narrative structure that the actions that they observe generally embody to be their own. In this way, form can operate as a powerful vehicle for the interpellation of others, particularly if its performer has the aforementioned "eloquence" of which Burke (1931) speaks (p. 40).

As in Burke's (1931) example of the play, storytelling involves the enactment of both information and form. Indeed, on some level, the distinction between them is largely artificial. As a narrator tells a story, she or he necessarily manipulates symbols in particular ways to portray a particular series of events. However, she or he cannot determine how the audience will experience that telling. On one hand, the audience might engage the story predominantly in terms of information. In such a case, comprehension exists; however, it likely lacks the degree of involvement that Burke attributes to form. On the other hand, the audience might experience

the telling mainly in regard to its form. In this case, the audience most likely will feel a sense of being "with" the narrator, which could facilitate the emergence of common ideological elements.

In this sense, the power of the story seems to emanate in part from the rhetorical vector that runs through it, specifically in its power simultaneously to illuminate and to conceal "what will happen next." The audience is drawn into the telling, as they follow each moment of the story as it unfolds and anticipate what will follow. Gergen and Gergen (1986) describe this aspect of storytelling as *dramatic engagement*: the capacity of stories to create a sense of drama and to invoke certain emotional responses on the part of audiences. Like Burke (1931), they suggest that dramatic engagement involves the content of the story, but concerns more fully how specific bits of that content relate to one another in the telling: "It is the *relationship* among events, not the events themselves, that seems chiefly responsible for sustaining dramatic engagement, and a theory of narrative form is essentially concerned with such relationships" (Gergen & Gergen, 1986, p. 28).

At some level, the creation of form is fundamental to storytelling. Storytelling consists basically of the verbalization of experiences that, as Carr (1986) suggests, already have a narrative structure. Narrative structure is what enables the events of narrative to unfold *as events*. Indeed, many authors identify this temporality of narrative as one of its most defining features (e.g., Bruner, 1996; Carr, 1986; Crites, 1986; Gergen & Gergen, 1986; Gubrium & Holstein, 1998; Freeman, 1997; Richardson, 1990; Ricoeur, 1981). Narratives relate events, and thereby have an inherently chronological character. What happens in one moment of a story calls the moments that follow into being. In this manner, stories seem to align intrinsically with the creation of form. As such, they seem to possess a natural disposition towards the inducement of action. As Burke (1931) suggests, the more eloquently one can tell a tale, the more involving it

becomes. The more involving it becomes, the more powerfully it can operate as a means for both the acquisition of ideology and the interpellation of subjects.

In this manner, storytelling can operate as an effective medium for corporate colonization. To the extent that a story can elicit identification between its teller and audience, the "spreading" of ideological elements from one to the other becomes likely. As I suggest previously, in every story, multiple ideologies always compete in the mobilization of meaning. Colonization occurs when one successfully suppresses, obscures, or subdues the others in the interpellation of subjects. To understand the mechanisms of colonization, one should look at the stories that a particular people tell in the everyday moments of their lives. Corporate colonization should entail both a proliferation of stories that embody the tenets of managerialism and a general acceptance of the narrative structure in those stories among their respective audiences. Most probably, wherever that acceptance occurs, the inculcation of managerial premises also is occurring. These premises constitute a particular narrative structure for ordering one's experiences.

In the act of identifying, audiences subtly and likely unbeknownst to themselves can draw themselves into the worldview of the storyteller and thereby become managerial subjects. Their movement "towards" the teller occurs as a shifting of their ideological positionings amidst a confluence of competing ideological currents. However, how various members of an audience make that movement differs radically, for both the particular ideological elements that structure one's experience at any moment and the inherently original way by which one negotiates them are themselves fundamentally unique. Choice and intention, regardless of how explicit they might be to the actor, remain always a factor in whatever might result.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored storytelling as a medium of corporate colonization. I suggest that while at any moment in one's experience, various ideological currents compete in the mobilization of meaning, corporate colonization occurs when one particular current becomes the dominant one, namely managerialism. Story, as a form of discourse, can operate as a site where this dominance emerges. As the narrator portrays the world in largely managerial terms, she or he creates conditions for the formation of a managerial subject. To the extent that the audience identifies with her or him through the telling of events, they have a greater likelihood of adopting the ideological premises of the narrator as their own. The creation of form, particularly in adept ways, encourages this process and thereby can contribute powerfully to the corporatization of society as a whole.

Future study can build upon these ideas in many ways. If the creation of form indeed does operate as a powerful vehicle for identification, then scholars should explore the many ways by which storytellers and audiences engage in this process. Quite possibly, certain ways of recounting events (e.g., chronologically, spatially, topically, linguistically) might constitute stories with greater or lesser rhetorical power. These ways likely depend upon the ideological positionings particular to both tellers and audiences even *before* storytelling begins. As I suggest previously, storytelling should be understood as a process of ideological shifting and transfiguring. From start to finish, all of its participants remain "inside" ideology. How form emerges and how it intersects with the inculcation of ideological elements intertwines with the general evolution of one's subjectivity as a participant in the storytelling moment.

Such exploration also could lead into a consideration of genre. Particular conventions and tropes might converge to constitute ways of telling stories that audiences and storytellers

expect in a more-or-less consistent manner. Indeed, these conventions can relate not only to the content or development of plot, but also to the audience's role and identity, the medium of the telling, or the physical or social context. Television, for example, operates in vast areas of the world as a primary medium for stories. Many scholars suggest that television programs can operate as powerful vehicles for the inculcation of cultural-ideological ways of being (e.g., Hetata, 1998; Shome, 1996; see also Chomsky, 1989). However, how television operates as a storytelling device likely varies across sociocultural milieus, as expectations regarding the way one tells stories also vary. In oral, face-to-face modes of storytelling, one might expect to find the same variance, dependent in part upon the expectations of participants. Given that many scholars suggest a close intersection of corporate dominance and consumerism (e.g., Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944; Hetata, 1998; Jacques, 1996; Jameson, 1984, 1998; Moreiras, 1998), I suggest that in many cases, stories of managerialism might manifest consumerist ideals, whether they might be told through electronic or face-to-face media. Future empirical study might pursue these claims.

Finally, future studies might explore the reflexive relationship between storyteller and the story. Arguably, the storyteller not only tells the story, but also regards its in a manner not dissimilar to how others in the audience regard it. Tellers have motives for recounting the stories that they tell, but as they interact with their respective audiences, some unforeseen, unbeknownst ideological shifting and transfiguring inevitably occurs for them as it does for the audience. Regardless of how entrenched a particular content, style, or way of rendering might be in regard to a particular story, the act of telling always has a degree of openness. It does not occur as some self-contained phenomenon, but unfolds with the actions of audience members and other elements of the context (Bakhtin, 1981, 1993; Holquist, 1990). One might find that this act can

operate as a powerful mechanism regarding the ideological positioning of storytellers, not only audiences. Stories may mediate the conversion or continuance of the subjectivity of the teller in profound ways, and thereby also contribute to corporate colonization.

Other avenues for future study exist. This paper offers merely a starting-point for the continued investigation of corporate colonization. If Deetz (1992) has observed correctly that corporate colonization indeed is occurring, then it implies that we do not control some of the most fundamental developments in our lives. However, to some extent, we can alter the way by which we will relate to those developments. If we ourselves tell and embrace stories that celebrate and maintain the tenets of managerialism, then we contribute to our own transformation into managerial subjects and to that of others. We become both colonizer and colonized. If corporate colonization truly has bettered our lives in some holistic manner, then our role as agents of colonization should not worry us. However, if such betterment has not occurred—or even worse, if harm has come from the spread of corporate ways of life—then we must confront those ways and dismantle them wherever we can. Otherwise, we risk ourselves becoming willing cogs in a vast machinery of our own and others' detriment.

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